

an image processing step of processing signals obtained by the sensor, so as to inspect a pattern of the sample.

55. A method according to claim 54, wherein in said image formation step, an image or a brightness signal relating to a desired portion of the sample is obtained by moving an illuminating beam and the sample relative to each other, or a two-dimensional image is obtain by use of a sensor wherein elements are arranged in two dimensions.

REMARKS

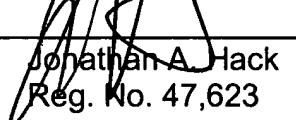
Applicants have amended claims 1-3, 5, 7, 9, 15-20, 22, 24, 26, 32-37, 39, 41, 43, 49, 50, and 51-53 to more appropriately claim the invention. All of the pending claims have been presented in this Preliminary Amendment for ease of examination.

If there is any fee due in connection with the filing of this Preliminary
Amendment, please charge the fee to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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